

Scholarship Support Helps Rebuild Lives Affected by Conflict

Ram Bahadur Gharti was born in one of Nepal's most remote and mountainous districts. Ram, an especially talented student in a family of 9 children, and his father dreamed that Ram would become a teacher. But in 2002, the Army came to his house, kidnapped his father and threatened the whole family.



Ram fled this violence and settled in an urban bus park with his grandmother. In order to support them, Ram quit school and at 13 became a day laborer. He commented on this traumatizing event that "it is very hard for our family because now we are split up and have to live in different places." He also worried that he would not be able to rejoin school and fulfill his father's dream.

Ram was working as a daily wage laborer, working in others' fields or building houses, when one of USAID's partners found him during an orientation for a local Parent Teacher Association. Today, Ram is getting counseling and he receives scholarship support to attend school.

This ongoing USAID-funded program provides a basic safety net to help those families and schools most affected by the conflict, by enhancing the incomes of families and enabling communities to better govern and support their schools. Working together with parent teacher associations, the program promotes participation in the governance of schools. Additionally, schools receive grants to rehabilitate schools by using youth labor- thus combining employment and skill building with a practical application. IDPs receive vocational training and they are given seed grants to start micro-enterprises. Importantly, community-based systems are funded to provide key support services (psycho-social, medical, legal, educational and other economic support) for victims of the conflict so they can begin to rebuild their lives

Now in grade 7, Ram is one of the most gifted students in his class, ranked in the top three. One of his teachers recalls seeing Ram on the first day of school: "He was slow, spoke very little and was not friendly. It's amazing to see this boy today. He's smart, good in his studies and asks questions in class." Ram is happier and feels better about himself. He is trying to fulfill his father's dream for him to be a teacher and says that, "The scholarship gave me new hope."